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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 23 March 2000, at 3.30 p.m.

Chairman Mr. SIMKHADA (Nepal)

CONTENTS

STATEMENT BY MRS. MADELEINE ALBRIGHT, SECRETARY OF STATE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION (continued)

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GE.00-11893 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.45 p.m.

STATEMENT BY MRS. MADELEINE ALBRIGHT, SECRETARY OF STATE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

1. Mrs. ALBRIGHT (United States of America) said that she had wanted very much to come personally to affirm America's commitment to international standards of human rights and to the work of the Commission on Human Rights, which had been founded in the aftermath of the Second World War as an instrument for investigating and calling attention to violations of human rights and as a forum for international discussion, consensus-building and action. In that spirit, the United States looked forward to working with each delegation.

2. Two main themes were at the heart of her presentation. First, for all its imperfections, democracy was the single surest path to the preservation and promotion of human rights. Second, no nation should feel threatened by the Commission's work, since its task was to support the right of people everywhere to control their own destinies and to ensure respect for universal rules accepted by Governments almost everywhere.

3. People who were free to exchange ideas, publish their thoughts, organize their labour and invest their capital would contribute far more to their societies than people stunted and held back by repression. It was encouraging to note that in the past quarter century the number of democratically elected Governments had increased from 30 to 120. The previous year, the Commission had approved a resolution affirming, without dissent, the universal right to democracy. It was important that the Commission pursue its efforts and approve in the current session the resolution on the promotion and consolidation of democracy that Romania had drafted and which made clear that democracy required far more than elections. She congratulated the Government of Poland, which in Warsaw in June 2000 would be hosting a major gathering of nations committed to democracy. That community of democracies initiative would reinforce the cause of human rights around the world.

4. One of the lessons of the past century was that those who violated the rights of their own citizens were frequently the cause of instability that crossed national lines. Serbia's Slobodan Milosević had initiated four wars during the 1990s, including a devastating campaign of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, which had killed thousands and had driven almost a million people from their homes. Having been indicted by the War Crimes Tribunal, Milosević was using the repressive powers of the State to intimidate independent media and political opposition. The Commission should condemn Milosević and help create a stable, democratic and prosperous Serbia.

5. The Commission should also vote on a resolution expressing concern about widespread denials of political, cultural, labour and religious freedom in China. The United States strongly believed that favourable action on that resolution was needed. Although China in recent years had made great progress in the social and economic fields, its human rights record did not match the obligations it had accepted. During the previous year, the human rights situation had

markedly deteriorated, as shown by the arrests of thousands of members of the Falun Gong movement, restrictions on the freedom of worship of Christians, Muslims and Buddhists, and the difficulties encountered by minority groups such as the Tibetans and Uighurs in exercising their cultural and linguistic heritage.

6. The United States also urged the Commission to support the resolution that the Czech Republic and Poland would present regarding the ongoing failure of the Cuban Government to respect the fundamental rights of its people, in particular the rights of free speech and free assembly. Human rights advocates continued to be jailed in Cuba for seeking peaceful democratic change. Specific cases included Marta Beatriz Roque, Vladimiro Roca, Felix Bonne, Rene Gomez and Oscar Biscet. Under President Clinton, the United States had sought more and more contact with the Cuban people and had become the single largest contributor of humanitarian aid to that country. They wanted to help the Cubans prepare for the day their universal rights were finally respected.

7. With regard to Chechnya, the United States understood Russia's need to protect its territorial integrity and to defend its population against terrorism and attacks from insurgent groups, but it objected to the indiscriminate use of force against civilians. Credible reports had been received of human rights violations by Russian forces in Chechnya, including extrajudicial killings. There were also reports that Chechen separatists had committed abuses, including the killing of civilians and prisoners. Thousands of Chechen civilians had died and more than 200,000 had been driven from their homes. The Russian Government had encouragingly decided to name an ombudsman, to accept international experts on its investigative team and to invite the High Commissioner for Human Rights to visit Chechnya. In view of the allegations of violations, the Russian Government should conduct a prompt and transparent investigation of all credible charges, provide the ICRC with unhindered access to all detainees and provide for the re-establishment of the OSCE Assistance Group in the region.

8. The Commission should also speak out against human rights violations committed by the Government of Sudan, including the international crime of slavery, even as it recognized the violations perpetrated by the rebels. It should reiterate its support for a democratic dialogue in Burma and condemn the authorities there for their relentless repression of fundamental rights. It should make clear again its opposition to the denial of basic freedoms and the brutal suppression of dissent by Iraq's Government. The Commission should also express its concern about religious discrimination in Iran against the Baha'i, and about the need for due process in the pending trial of 13 Iranian Jews.

9. One of the Commission's vital tasks was to endorse the two protocols additional to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, addressing the issues of child soldiers and the exploitation of children through prostitution and pornography. The United States would take an active part in preparing the World Conference on Racism. Lastly, her Government appealed to all Governments to support the work of the Commission, with "faith in fundamental human rights, in the worth of every human person, in the equal rights of men and women, and of nations large and small", in order to secure for future generations a world of peace and justice.

RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION (agenda item 6) (continued) (E/CN.4/2000/15, 16 and Add.1, and 17; E/CN.4/2000/NGO/18, 28, 53, 69, 102 and 122; E/CN.4/Sub.2/1999/7 and Add.1, and 8; A/54/347)

10. Mr. GLÉLÉ-AHANHANZO (Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance), presenting his report (E/CN.4/2000/16 and Add.1), expressed his concern at the powerful manifestations of xenophobia and racism in the lead-up to the World Conference. Three noteworthy events had caught his attention: the rise to power in Austria of the Freedom Party (FPO), attacks on North African migrant workers in the south of Spain and the case of young Amadou Diallo, shot by policemen in the city of New York.

11. The entry of an extreme right-wing party to the Austrian Government needed close attention. There was reason to fear that the Austrian example might be followed and that similar organizations might acquire a new political dynamism and popular sympathy. The European Union had already reacted vigorously and the United Nations should do the same.

12. In El Ejido, in the south of Spain, the murder of a young Spanish woman by a deranged individual of Moroccan origin was followed by punitive expeditions by hundreds of Spaniards against the town's North African inhabitants. Forty-nine persons had reportedly been wounded and much property belonging to foreigners destroyed. Spain had been taken by surprise by that violent outbreak of racism and xenophobia and should make an effort to prepare its population to extend a better welcome and improve its efforts to integrate foreigners, whose numbers were bound to grow, there as elsewhere, according to the studies made by international organizations and the European Union. Such action was necessary in view of the many cases of aggression against foreigners in other Spanish towns mentioned in the report.

13. In the case of the young Guinean immigrant, killed in February 2000 by four policemen who had shot him 41 times, he had found out in the press, since the Government of the United States had not replied to his communication, that the four police officers had been acquitted of murder charges. According to Amnesty International, the Diallo case was one of over a dozen similar cases which had occurred in the previous five years, in the course of which Blacks, Hispanics and members of other minorities had been killed by the police in highly suspicious circumstances.

14. Another situation to which he had paid particular attention was the spread of racist ideologies over the Internet. In previous statements before the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights, he had already proposed international discussions to find ways of countering that harmful activity, which no frontier could stop.

15. He had given consideration to the victims of racial discrimination, including the Roma, a minority which was vulnerable in practically all European countries. In the course of his mission to the Czech Republic, Romania and Hungary, from 20 to 30 September 1999, the Governments of those countries had shown themselves very cooperative, open to dialogue and keen to improve the situation of the Roma. Positive measures had been adopted in all three countries, leading to their gradual integration, while respecting their cultural identity.

16. Regarding the follow-up to earlier missions, he noted that the South African Government had adopted a number of measures to combat xenophobia and residual forms of racism and racial discrimination. It had launched a campaign advocating better coexistence with foreigners and the South African Parliament had adopted four-part legislation in favour of equality through positive action to prevent and combat racial discrimination. The French Government had adopted a series of measures to combat racism. The laws on immigration had been revised; the granting of entry visas into France for people from the "south" had been made easier, while the procedure for consideration of the cases of people detained in holding centres and conditions of expulsion had been brought more into line with human rights requirements. There was a danger, however, that those efforts would run up against recent changes in French public opinion. A poll in November 1999 had shown that 69 per cent of French people admitted to being "rather racist", "a little racist" or "not very racist", while only 29 per cent stated that they were "not at all racist". Lastly, the Kuwaiti Government had informed him that it had taken measures to implement his recommendations concerning the Bidoune and migrant workers.

17. With the World Conference looming, there was an urgent need to remember that racism and racial discrimination were not things of the past which could be ignored. The marginalization of human groups because of their ethnic or racial origins should be unremittingly denounced. Racial discrimination should be combated not only using the means of education and penal prosecution, but also through the introduction of economic and social measures to assist persons who were marginalized as a result of discriminatory practices.

18. In conclusion, he proposed that every country concerned should adopt a national plan for the economic and social integration of minorities (ethnic or national), indigenous populations and migrants, on which he would report to the World Conference against Racism.

19. Mr. MENDONÇA E MOURA (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the countries of the European Union, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe associated with the European Union (Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia) and the associated countries (Cyprus, Malta and Turkey), said that the European Union was founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, the right of equality before the law, non-discrimination and respect for diversity.

20. Racism, xenophobia and intolerance were unacceptable because they impaired the exercise of fundamental rights and endangered international peace and security. It was within the responsibility of States to ensure all human rights to all persons within their jurisdiction and to guarantee that they did not suffer from any kind of de jure or de facto discrimination. The States should not only adopt legal systems and administrative practices that were non-discriminatory, but they should also counter discriminatory behaviour through awareness-raising and education campaigns. It was the positive obligation of all States to protect individuals from acts by third parties that impeded the enjoyment of their human rights. It was necessary to build on lessons from the past. In that respect, the Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, held in January 2000, was an important contribution in the struggle against racism, xenophobia and intolerance.

21. In a globalized world, where contacts between people of different backgrounds were increasingly numerous, it was important to give full recognition to the principle of equal rights for all individuals without consideration for their social, cultural, national or ethnic backgrounds. Minorities, indigenous people and migrants should be encouraged to take an active part in the struggle against racism and their specific needs should receive special attention. Among those groups, special emphasis should be placed on women, who often suffered the risk of double discrimination, because of their origin as well as their gender. Since weak economic and social conditions and cultural differences were major causes of racist tendencies, it was essential to safeguard all economic, social and cultural rights, as well as civil and political rights, in order to achieve tolerance, equality, social cohesion and stability.

22. It was of extreme importance to recognize that the United Nations was the first international forum to address the problem of racism and xenophobia in a comprehensive manner. In that respect, all States which had not yet done so should be encouraged to join the 155 States in ratifying or acceding to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which was a major instrument in that struggle. The European Union also called on the States parties to that Convention to submit their reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination without further delay, to make the declaration under article 14 of the Convention and to accept the amendment to article 8, which enabled the Committee to organize itself better financially.

23. With regard to the World Conference against Racism, the European Union thanked the African Group, and especially the Ambassador of Senegal, for their contribution to the preparatory process and reaffirmed its commitment to work with all its partners in a spirit of cooperation and mutual understanding at the first preparatory committee that would be held at the beginning of the following month. In order to prepare the World Conference, the Council of Europe would be organizing a conference in Strasbourg, in October 2000, entitled "All different, all equal: from principle to practice - European contribution to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance", in an evolving continuity with the 1995 youth campaign "All different, all equal". The European Union believed that the contribution of NGOs and civil society in combating racism and racial discrimination was essential. It therefore supported the full participation of NGOs, both in the World Conference itself and in the national and regional preparatory processes.

24. The European Union condemned all acts of anti-semitism, racism and xenophobia. It favoured vigorous measures designed to combat them whenever and wherever they occurred within the Union. In accordance with article 13 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, the Council could adopt every necessary measure to fight discrimination founded on sex, race or ethnic origin, on religious belief or on conscience, on any handicap, on age or on sexual orientation. Anti-discriminatory legislative measures and a Community Action Programme to combat discrimination (2001-2006) were under consideration. By adopting those measures, the European Union was taking a major step to effectively combat discrimination, as well as to ensure equal treatment in the important realms of employment and the social sector. Furthermore, the new article 29 of the Treaty on European Union mentioned the struggle against racism and xenophobia as one of the means of developing an area of freedom, security and justice. On 15 July 1996, the Council had already adopted a Joint Action to ensure effective

judicial cooperation between member States in the fight against racism and xenophobia. Regular monitoring of the implementation of the Joint Action took place and the second evaluation report was due in June 2000.

25. The European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, which had been established on the occasion of the European Year Against Racism in 1997, also played an important role in the preparation of the World Conference against Racism. The activities of the European NGO network against racism also deserved praise. The European Union member States were all adopting legislative measures to combat the scourges of racism and intolerance, which also affected Europe and which all Governments should combat.

26. Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh) said that although institutionalized racism practised under apartheid had now faded into history, a new chapter had unfortunately replaced it with the resurgence of xenophobia, ultra-nationalism and racially-motivated policies directed against ethnic minorities, foreigners, immigrants and refugee populations. Immigration procedures at airports and entry points were often biased against certain categories of persons depending on their race and ethnicity or national origins. Such policy practices were demeaning to human dignity. Often regulatory measures aimed at protecting the domestic labour force tended to be discriminatory in essence.

27. Discriminatory practices were directed not only against foreigners, but also against fellow citizens in many multiracial, multi-ethnic, multicultural societies. The seeds of racism could not be uprooted by mere legislative enactments or by reducing social inequalities; attitudes had to be changed through education, by imparting a sense of tolerance and respect for differences. In that respect, NGOs had an important role to play. Another disturbing trend was the use of new communication technologies such as the Internet for the spread of racial hatred. Regulatory measures had to be taken to stop that misuse of communication technologies.

28. Bangladesh was deeply committed to fully implement the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, to which it was a party. Its society was based on the values of communal harmony, religious tolerance, respect for human rights and human dignity. Bangladesh strongly supported the forthcoming World Conference against Racism, to be held in 2001, and welcomed the offer of the Islamic Republic of Iran to hold the Asian regional preparatory meeting.

29. In conclusion, he expressed the hope that in future it would be possible to convert diversity from a source of conflict into a source of strength.

30. Mr. BELIZ (Observer for Panama), speaking on behalf of the Group of Central American Countries, welcomed the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 1999/78 and the oral report by the Special Rapporteur. He expressed appreciation for the action taken by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights within the framework of the Third Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. The Group wanted to take an active part in the work of the preparatory committee for the World Conference against Racism, and in that of the preparatory regional conference for Latin America and the Caribbean, which would be held in Brazil in the course of the year.

31. The Group of Central American Countries was concerned by the manifestations of racism, xenophobia and intolerance in the world, and in particular by the discrimination affecting migrant workers. It deplored the resurgence of racist violence in recent months, especially in the more developed countries, which should be able to show an example of tolerance and solidarity, and it condemned the attitude of some political parties which preached racial hatred.

32. He appealed for sufficient funds to be made available, within the United Nations budget, to finance the regional conferences and the World Conference and he urged the wealthier countries to contribute generously to the voluntary fund set up for that purpose.

33. Mr. MOUNIR (Observer for Egypt) also deplored the rise of racism and discrimination against migrant workers. Egypt was concerned at the hostility shown against them, for religious as well as economic reasons, and which was fostered by some intellectual circles and media. One way of combating that dangerous phenomenon was to implement the Commission's decision 1999/82 on the defamation of religions.

34. The future World Conference against Racism should also make a positive contribution. The preparatory work for the Conference should deal with the many different aspects and effects of racism. The Egyptian delegation would take an active part in the African and Islamic preparations and it welcomed Senegal's offer to host the African regional conference. Being keen to promote dialogue between cultures and civilizations, Egypt attached considerable importance to the Conference, especially in view of the fact that the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families had still not come into force.

35. Mr. KAVADZE (Observer for Georgia) said his country was facing manifestations of ethnic intolerance and ethnic antagonism in the separatist regime of Abkhazia. Despite the broad measure of autonomy granted to the region, the separatists had been waging armed conflict backed by foreign support and pursuing a policy of ethnic cleansing, which had led to the killing or expulsion of some 250,000 ethnic Georgians. Even after all military operations had ceased and CIS peacekeepers had been deployed in the area, the separatists had opposed the return of refugees and displaced persons and had even forcibly expelled again several tens of thousands of returned displaced people and destroyed thousands of houses in May 1998. There were currently no more Georgians on more than two thirds of the territory of Abkhazia. On many occasions the Security Council had condemned the forced displacement of population and the seizure of the property of Georgians driven away from the region. In the district of Gali, the 40,000 returning refugees had suffered cultural, religious and administrative discrimination by the Sukhumi regime. More than 250,000 refugees and displaced persons were still unable to return to their homes, despite the requests made by the United Nations Security Council, the OSCE, the European Union, the Council of Europe and the CIS.

36. The time had come for the Commission on Human Rights to pay attention to the civilian population subjected to the policy of ethnic cleansing in Abkhazia. In earlier sessions, Georgia, a sovereign and democratic State which recognized and applied all human rights instruments, had several times requested the appointment of a special rapporteur to inquire into the situation

in Abkhazia, but to no avail. It now appealed to the existing rapporteurs to take up the matter, according to their terms of reference, and to report back to the Commission on the results of their inquiry.

37. Georgia was actively involved in the preparatory work of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. She hoped the World Conference would define a global system-wide strategy and mechanisms to combat any form of discrimination, which could lead to concrete results for the affected population.

38. Mrs. BAGUIROVA (Azerbaijan Women and Development Center) said that nationalism, racism and xenophobia were not related only to economic factors and to democracy. The origin of the problem lay in education, which was unable in the modern age to create unity between people. The birth and development of languages and nations was a natural, ongoing process. It was important in that process to avoid conflicts and to safeguard respect for the human rights and security of societies.

39. In order to combat nationalism, racism and xenophobia, an international institute of languages and cultures of the world should be set up under the aegis of the United Nations, to conduct scientific research aimed at identifying the common roots of all existing cultures, languages and religions in the world and the common origin of mankind. The institute's findings would then be incorporated into the educational systems of all countries, in order to give all people a sense of their common identity and to eliminate nationalism. The institute would be financed not only by the United Nations but also by Governments and the private sector. The Azerbaijan Women and Development Centre invited session participants and the Member States of the United Nations to support the idea of establishing, under the aegis of the United Nations, the International Institute of Languages and Cultures of the World, which she was sure would contribute to peaceful relationships between people and countries.

40. Mr. LITTMAN (Association for World Education) recalled that the previous year his organization had expressed strong opposition to resolution 1999/82 entitled "Defamation of religions", in the belief that such a resolution would eventually be used to condemn anyone for almost anything. Since resolution 1999/82 had been adopted, however, the Association for World Education had to abide by it. The Association endorsed paragraph 2 of the resolution, in which the Commission expressed deep concern that Islam was frequently and wrongly associated with human rights violations and terrorism. Having always distinguished between Islam and Islamism, his Association heartily encouraged more representatives to make the same distinction loud and clear, within the precincts of the Commission. In the same spirit, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Commission on Human Rights had to react to the "Rushdie syndrome". Otherwise the world would have the impression that all the OIC countries approved the arbitrary death sentence on the British writer.

41. Another very grave example of defamation of a religion, which had occurred in the Commission in 1991, concerned Judaism. The representative of Syria had urged members of the Commission to read a book repeating accusations of blood crime made against the Jews in Damascus, which, according to him, demonstrated unequivocally the historical reality of Zionist racism. The Syrian General Tlass, who had prefaced the book, had reiterated his conviction regarding the truth of the accusations in an interview published by France-Pays arabes in

August 1999 in Paris. The Commission should condemn those obscene attacks and other unacceptable criticism against Judaism under resolution 1999/82. Moreover, under item 5, the Association for World Education had already appealed to the Pope, who was currently in Israel, to seek the removal of the libellous commemorative stone plaque from the Terra Sancta church in Damascus. What was needed was a gesture confirming that Judaism, Christianity and Islam could be true partners in a Middle East peace brotherhood. As genuine hopes for a Middle East peace process grew, including the negotiations between Syria and Israel, it was time to sweep away the last remains of ignorance and fanaticism and the vindictive spirit of persecution symbolized in the Damascus affair. They were also appealing to the United States Secretary of State, Mrs. Albright, to raise the matter with President Clinton, so that the latter could pass the idea on to the Syrian President Hafez El Assad.

42. Mr. GUBERMAN (World Jewish Congress), referring to the political situation in Austria, made clear that his comments were not directed at all Austria's people and that he supported democratic institutions. However, the corollary to accepting the outcome of the democratic process was the right to protest peacefully the result of that process. While citizens in all countries should have the right freely to elect the government of their choosing, it was the right of other countries to determine with whom their own States would interact. A defining feature of the twentieth century was the link between racism and war. Several European countries had confronted their histories and had recognized their complicity in the events leading up to the Second World War. Unfortunately, not all countries had engaged in that process.

43. It was a dangerous development when an ultra-conservative party such as the Freedom Party, whose leaders openly praised Nazi policies and apologist views, should be part of the Austrian Government. Some said that the Freedom Party was providing a response to difficult issues such as globalization, rising unemployment, increased immigration and eroding national sovereignty. Others dismissed the Freedom Party and Jörg Haider's actions as political opportunism. But everybody knew what happened when society's challenges were answered by intolerance and the search for scapegoats. Once feelings of hatred were openly expressed, they tended to run out of control.

44. Fourteen European Union members had acted rapidly and decisively to partially isolate the current Government of Austria. The World Jewish Congress stood behind all those in Austria who believed in tolerance and racial harmony, and with all Governments and peoples everywhere who guarded the principles set forth in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

45. Mr. BELLAMY (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions - ICFTU) said that his organization, which represented 215 trade unions in 145 countries and which spoke on behalf of 125 million trade unionists, was aiming to ensure that equal treatment and equal opportunities in employment were accessible to all. Although practically all workers were currently vulnerable because security of employment had become a luxury, some categories of workers were more exposed than others. The most vulnerable were those discriminated against because of their gender or sexual orientation, their race, their national origin, their age, the colour of their skin or their religion. Disabled workers were also at risk, despite the fact that ILO Convention No. 111 concerning discrimination in respect of employment and occupation had been ratified by 140 countries.

46. Almost half the working population of the world consisted of women. The 71st International Women's Conference of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, which had been held in Rio de Janeiro in May 1999, had declared that they continued to be adversely affected by structural adjustment programmes. The ICFTU's priority was to ensure more and better jobs for women, equal pay for equal work and access to positions of responsibility and continuing vocational training.

47. There were over 42 million officially recognized migrants in the world, while millions of others, who had no papers, were left with no choice but to take dangerous and degrading jobs. The discrimination to which some members of ethnic minorities were exposed, such as those subjected to forced labour in the State of Karen in the former Burma, constituted a serious violation of human rights. The ILO had decided to exclude Myanmar de facto from membership owing to the systematic use of forced labour by the ruling military junta. It appeared hard to believe that the same country might be hosting a preparatory meeting for the World Conference against Racism.

48. Disabled persons made up one tenth of the world's population and those who were employed had to face many kinds of discrimination, in terms of underpaid jobs, insecure conditions and unrewarding work. Age-related job discrimination was also a matter of concern. In Europe, fewer and fewer unemployed over 50 years old ever found work again. Homosexuals were another group of workers who were particularly vulnerable. The trade unions, especially in the public sector, were becoming aware of the extent to which they were often marginalized and discriminated against. In response, Public Services International and Educational International had devised a kit that the trade unions could use to help such workers organize. Fighting for equality meant admitting diversity, because all workers were equally entitled to dignity and justice.

49. Mrs. SHARFELDDIN (International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination - EAFORD) said that racism was a phenomenon which had persisted throughout human history and which had resulted in many tragedies. The most recent of those included the premeditated plan to annihilate the native Indians and the exploitation of Africans.

50. Although racism was losing its popularity, it was being replaced gradually by discrimination between nations and peoples, on the basis of rich versus poor nations and developed versus developing countries. The advanced nations in general looked condescendingly on the less advanced and the gap had grown even wider because some of the advanced nations had constantly taken advantage of the bad circumstances from which less advanced nations had suffered. By so doing, they had gained even more power over developing countries and had continued to exhaust their resources. That had led to major disparities and imbalances in world revenues between West and East, and between North and South. That had given rise in turn to feelings of injustice and oppression among people in developing countries and had led some groups to migrate in unrestrained large numbers to the advanced world. The negative and tragic consequences of such wide-scale migration had affected both the migrating people and the populations in which they had to be integrated. Injustice and oppression had also led other groups to react through violence and terrorism, but it was the innocent victims who always ended up paying the price with their lives for crimes they had not committed.

51. The root cause of racism and racial discrimination was poverty, which itself originated in ignorance and led to backwardness. If that vicious circle could be broken, it might be possible to eliminate discrimination. The more powerful countries, which had achieved high levels of progress in science and technology, should assist the less favoured countries to attain the same level, which meant providing them with the means to develop and progress, an objective which could only be achieved through education. The foreign aid offered by developed countries, which should be multiplied many times, should be governed by an international law and directed to the construction of schools, educational institutions and universities. That should be the first step towards enhancing the potential for development and, in turn, towards fighting discrimination.

52. The leaders of the developed world should realize that their efforts to resolve the problem of underdevelopment and its related consequences of racism and racial discrimination were not only in the best interests of their own people but also a way of paying back their debt to developing nations.

53. Mrs. ABUDU (Earth Justice Legal Defense Fund) said she deplored environmental racism, which referred to any Government, institutional or industrial action, or failure to act, that had a negative environmental impact which harmed, whether intentionally or unintentionally, individuals, groups or communities based on race or colour. The right to a sound environment for every individual had been affirmed in the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

54. In the United States of America, the victims of environmental racism were chiefly African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, Asians and Pacific Islanders. While environmental racism had been well documented for more than a decade by NGOs, universities and even government bodies, the United States Government had provided no effective remedies to the victims or taken effective action to stop such racist practices. As a result, human rights violations arising out of environmental racism had become worse. For example, in November 1999, the United States health authorities had issued alarming reports concerning dioxin levels found in the blood of residents of Mossville (Louisiana). That dioxin pollution had been caused by local industries, which had polluted the area with nearly 2 million pounds of toxic chemicals each year with the approval of the Government. Notwithstanding the fact that dioxin was considered harmful for human health and for the environment by the United Nations Environment Programme, the authorities had refused to provide adequate health services to Mossville residents, relocate them away from the source of exposure or impose a moratorium on industrial pollution in the area.

55. The destructive effects of environmental racism were not, however, exclusive to the United States. As the Sub-Commission expert, Mr. Oloka-Onyango, had noted in his working paper on globalization and racism (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1999/8), racism and globalization came together in the environment, with the phenomenon referred to as "global environmental racism", a manifestation of a policy which had found expression in countries like the United States, but which also had a global dimension.

56. Environmental racism was an example also of the double standard applied to different communities, villages or cities. One example of that double standard was the environmentally devastating methods of extraction of natural resources utilized by multinational corporations in developing countries, which had adverse effects on local populations, like the Ogoni and other peoples of the Niger Delta in Nigeria, the U'wa people of North-East Colombia, the Amungme of West Papua, Indonesia, and the indigenous people of Burma. Another example of environmental racism was the dumping of toxic wastes in developing countries.

57. Although the United States had ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, it had still not submitted its first report on compliance to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The Earth Justice Legal Defense Fund requested the Commission to urge the United States to submit its first report without delay and for the report to include a section on environmental racism. Furthermore, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism should conduct an in-depth investigation into the extent to which environmental racism violated the human rights of people of colour globally.

58. Mrs. TANAKA (International Movement against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism - IMADR) said that her organization was particularly concerned over the plight of groups of people who suffered from perennial and persistent forms of discrimination, particularly the Sinti and Roma in Europe and the Dalits and the Burakumin in South Asia.

59. IMADR therefore welcomed the missions undertaken by the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania to investigate the situation of Roma, as well as the decision taken by the Sub-Commission at its previous session to entrust one of its experts with the preparation of a study on the human rights problems of the Roma. It also welcomed the fact that the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities had raised those issues, including discrimination, extreme poverty, high rates of illiteracy and infant mortality, at a meeting in September 1999. It hoped that the European preparatory process for the World Conference against Racism and the World Conference itself would pay due attention to the problem and come up with concrete recommendations and action plans.

60. In Asia, discrimination against the Dalits and Burakumin was based on descent and caste discrimination, particularly in Japan. As in the case of Europe, the IMADR encouraged the Governments in the Asia-Pacific Region to pay particular attention to those specific forms of racial discrimination in their national or regional preparations for the World Conference against Racism. They should also consider inviting the Special Rapporteur to their countries so that he could elaborate concrete recommendations as to further measures to be taken to end such practices. Appropriate measures could also be considered at the World Conference itself.

61. Particular attention should also be paid by the Special Rapporteur and by the World Conference to the fact that racial discrimination was very often compounded by gender discrimination. In that regard, IMADR welcomed the recently adopted general recommendation of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in that respect.

62. Mrs. RAS-WORK (International Movement for Fraternal Union Among Races and Peoples - UFER) recalled that UFER had been combating racism, exclusion, xenophobia and intolerance since its foundation in 1952. It valued the actions undertaken by the United Nations to combat racism and welcomed in particular the decision made in General Assembly resolution 52/111 of 12 December 1997 to convene a World Conference against Racism in 2001. The holding of the Conference gave hope to the victims of exclusion and Governments, organizations and individuals should collaborate and mobilize to make the Conference a success.

63. As a contribution towards the Conference, UFER was preparing to hold a training session for human rights activists from 10-19 April, during the Commission's session. The participants, namely those representing countries which had experienced conflict and genocide, such as Korea, Lebanon, Brazil, South Africa, Burundi, Rwanda and the Congo, as well as experts, psychotherapists, historians and international civil servants would have an opportunity to share their experiences and to analyse the causes of racism, ethnic discrimination and xenophobia, in order to prevent those phenomena leading to conflict and human tragedy.

64. UFER firmly believed in man's capacity for love and tolerance and relied on those positive values to fight against political demagogues and power-mongers who misused human differences to promote their own political agendas.

Statements in exercising the right of reply

65. Mr. AMAT FORES (Cuba) said it was regrettable that Mrs. Albright had come so far, not to contribute positively to the Commission's work, but to undermine its efforts to restore its credibility and prestige. Her statement before the Commission had been aimed chiefly at preparing the way for a fresh initiative against Cuba, as at the 1999 session, through her puppets on the Commission, who did not seem to understand that their attitude would lead them nowhere and could only discredit them.

66. For over 40 years, the United States had been conducting a relentless propaganda campaign against Cuba, defending the criminal tyrants who had stripped the country and caused the death of over 20,000 Cubans. For over 40 years, the United States had been using every means possible to bring the Cuban people to its knees, from the Bay of Pigs invasion to their recent efforts to strengthen the blockade, including terrorist actions and biological warfare.

67. Mr. SIDOROV (Russian Federation) reaffirmed that the Russian Government was acting in Chechnya in conformity with its international obligations in order to preserve its territorial integrity. All democratic States had not only the right but also the duty to protect their citizens, regardless of their nationality or their religious convictions. That was the aim of the Russian authorities in Chechnya, where the operations they were conducting were directed not against the Chechen people or Muslims but against terrorists and mercenaries. The allegations by some speakers that the Russian Government made blind use of force against the civilian population in Chechnya were therefore completely groundless. The many organizations which had visited the region, such as the ICRC, Human Rights Watch, MSF and many others, and the 500 foreign press correspondents accredited in the region could bear witness to that. The aim of the operations was on the contrary to re-establish and protect human rights in Chechnya.

68. Mr. QIAO Zonghuai (China) strongly rejected the groundless charges and slanders against China made not only by Mrs. Albright but also by other Western guest speakers.

69. China attached great importance to the building of democracy and the legal system and to the promotion and protection of civil and political rights. Various positive measures had been adopted to enhance judicial transparency and law enforcement supervision and to combat corruption. According to the Chinese Constitution, all Chinese citizens were entitled to freedom of expression, assembly, association and religious belief, while the human rights of all ethnic minorities, including the Tibetan people, were also fully respected. It was to protect those rights even better that the Chinese Government had banned the Falun Gong Movement, which had already claimed the lives of more than 1,400 practitioners, which spread fallacies and which endangered the life and health of the Chinese people. The United States Government was quick to criticize the human rights situation in other countries, but tended to forget that sects were severely repressed in their own country, where gross violations of human rights were committed, including notorious racial discrimination, police brutality, torture in prison, infringement of women's rights and campus gun killings. Instead of interfering in the internal affairs of other countries under the pretext of human rights, the United States should spend more time examining its own human rights situation, as they were hardly in a position to judge others.

70. Mr. HUSSAIN (Observer for Iraq) recalled that Mrs. Albright had replied in the affirmative to the question of whether it was worth sacrificing thousands of people to achieve the objective set by the economic embargo against Iraq. Such an inhuman person was not entitled to speak about respect for human rights in Iraq. For those rights to be respected, the economic embargo, which the United States Government insisted on imposing on Iraq with no concern for the suffering caused to the Iraqi people, should be lifted. That suffering was further aggravated by continuous American attacks against civilian installations and oil installations, which deprived Iraq of its main source of subsistence, in violation of Security Council resolutions. Furthermore, Mrs. Albright, who said she attached such importance to human rights in Iraq, appeared to forget that the first of those rights was the right to life, which was endangered by the depleted uranium used by the United States in Iraq, leading to the spread of cancer and leukaemia, as well as pollution in the country.

71. Mr. SOUTHWICK (United States of America) reaffirmed, as Mrs. Albright had done, that no country should feel threatened by the Commission. The Commission's task was to support people's right everywhere in the world to control their destinies and to ensure that universal standards were applied. The United States Government therefore reiterated its appeal to all other Governments to support the Commission's action and to help it achieve its objectives.

72. Mr. AMAT FORES (Cuba) noted the hypocritical attitude of the United States, who claimed to support people's right to be masters of their own destinies, whereas they did everything precisely to prevent the Cuban people from following the path it had chosen. The United States wanted to give other countries lessons, whereas on its own territory many people were deprived of even the most fundamental rights. The most glaring cases included indigenous peoples, who had been persecuted and exterminated, or African-Americans and Hispanic-Americans, who were constantly up against racism, discrimination and police brutality.

The Commission had to make sure it was not manipulated by the United States, which were trying to make it into their ideological tool in order to impose a new world order, opposed to all rights, on the world at large, and in particular on the countries of the South.

73. Mr. QIAO Zonghuai (China) said that the statement by the United States representative illustrated all the arrogance of that super-Power. He should be reminded that in the United Nations all countries were sovereign States on an equal footing. By using the Commission for electoral purposes, the United States was infringing the sovereignty of other countries and harming the Commission's own credibility.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.